

An Investigation of Politician Mobility in the United Kingdom

Author & Corresponding Author

Rob Gandy BA (Hons) MSc PhD FIS MHM DipHM

Visting Professor, Liverpool Business School, Liverpool John Moores University,
Liverpool, United Kingdom

Address: 13, Woodkind Hey

Spital

Wirral

Merseyside CH63 9JY

United Kingdom

Email: rob.gandy@ntlworld.com

Telephone: ++44 151 334 6160

Fax: ++44 151 334 6160

Keywords

- Nomogramma di Gandy
- Political Parties
- Politician Mobility
- Presence
- Psephology
- United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the influence of the politics of presence in the most recent parliamentary and European elections in the United Kingdom by examining the question of politician mobility. It establishes the patterns of regional relationships between the constituencies served by elected representatives and their place of birth, and takes into account age, gender and political party. It includes the issues of seat marginality and “career politicians”. Analytical techniques include the *Nomogramma di Gandy* and multiple correspondence analysis.

The UK regions, outside London, which have the highest number of MPs and MEPs born per head of population are also the ones that have the least politician mobility.

The south east of England, and in particular London have the greatest mobility. In general the patterns for MPs and MEPs are fairly similar, except in respect of age.

Females were more likely to cross more than one regional boundary than males, particularly for Conservative MPs, and there was a higher differential in this regard

for MEPs compared to MPs. It was concluded that whilst there is considerable

politician mobility for both MPs and MEPs, the vast majority represent constituencies within their region of birth, or an adjacent region.

INTRODUCTION

There are many factors that can influence whether someone will be able to pursue a long and successful high-level career in politics. These will include their personal attributes and ambitions, as well their basic political beliefs and the political party that they join. Arguably one of the most critical factors is that of opportunity: in four of the five general elections in the United Kingdom (UK) between 1987 and 2005, fewer than nine percent of constituencies changed hands, with a minimum of 572 seats held by the parties that already held them. The exception was the Labour landslide of 1997, when even then, 461 (72 percent) of seats were held (Electoral Calculus 2009; Hannan, 2009). Therefore, the opportunity to be the Member of Parliament (MP) for one of the “safe seats” is arguably essential for political longevity. The distribution of such seats across the UK for the various political parties is not uniform, with the “north-south divide” broadly reflected by the dominance of Labour in the north of England, Scotland and Wales, and the dominance of the Conservatives in the south, west and east of England, outside London (Spatial Inequalities Group, University of Sheffield, 2012). This can influence party political strategies, as witnessed by John Denham, the former Labour cabinet minister and one of just 10 Labour MPs elected in 2010 in southern seats outside London, appealing for a stop to talk about a north-south divide by Labour if it wanted to avoid alienating voters in southern England who abandoned the party at the 2010 election (Watt, 2012). Accordingly, ambitious and talented Labour politicians born in the south may need to move north to obtain a safe seat, and vice versa for ambitious and talented Conservative politicians born in the north.

Yet there can be tensions and influences in candidate selection processes as the politics of presence come into play (Phillips, 1995). Presence is described as a desire to have as a representative someone who has experienced the same things as those they will represent (Childs and Cowley, 2011). Cowley (2013) found that ‘having the same political views’ and (being from the) ‘same area’ were clearly the two most important characteristics for

candidates, well ahead of social class, education, racial group, religion, sexual orientation, age and sex. Thirty-eight percent gave a higher priority to the geographic area over political views. This serves to highlight the issue of whether it is best to select a local candidate, as opposed to someone from a distance. There is widespread acknowledgement in the UK that being a local candidate can be an asset (Childs and Cowley, 2011; Johnson and Rosenblatt, 2007); voters say they value local MPs (Cowley and Campbell, forthcoming), and identify localness - being from the local area - as one of the most important attributes for their MP to have (Johnson and Rosenblatt, 2007). Experimental survey work by Cowley and Campbell (forthcoming) found that candidates from outside the local area were especially heavily penalised, compared to local candidates, and the impact of whether a candidate was local or not was *fifteen times* that of biological sex, and much greater than that of occupation.

Arzheimer and Evans (2011) found that, in English constituencies, distance between a voter and candidates from the three main parties (Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat) mattered, even when controlling for traditional predictors of voting, such as party feeling and incumbency advantage. Their findings were clear: voters found distant candidates less appealing than local ones although the effect is relatively small; in a safe constituency, residency is not game-changing, but in a marginal constituency the small distance effect could prove more decisive, and therefore parachuting in outsiders is risky, unless the constituency is very safe.

Party leaders will want to ensure that they are surrounded by skilled and talented MPs who can promote the party and its policies, and be effective in parliament, and government when the time comes. It would be impractical and inappropriate to assume that all such MPs must only come from those areas where the party has its safe seats. To exclude other candidates simply because they are from other parts of the UK, even the heartlands of opposing parties, makes no meritocratic sense. Therefore the placement of such candidates in safe seats will involve judgement and balance.

It is known that elected politicians who have strong local ties and individual support bases are more likely to be individualistic and so break party unity in parliament. They are simply

less dependent on the parties themselves for their careers, political and otherwise. Therefore local-level political experience is a strong predictor of being a maverick in parliament (Tavits, 2009). This presents a dilemma for party leaders (who will want strong party discipline), particularly acute in cartel parties, which stems from the position of MPs as both the base of the party in public office and the delegates of the party on the ground. One response is for leaders to democratise candidate selection in form, while centralising control in practice (Katz, 2001). Inevitably there can sometimes be conflict between a local and national party in how candidate selection processes are undertaken: the imposition of an all-women shortlist by Labour in the Blaenau Gwent constituency for the 2005 general election saw a local male candidate resign from the party and fight and win the seat as an independent (Childs and Cowley, 2011); and Rotherham Labour party members walked out when they were presented with a shortlist of candidates to represent the party at the 2012 by-election which they felt did not include a local candidate (BBC News, 2012a).

The situation can be exacerbated by a trend, which concerns some, whereby a career route has developed in which someone begins working for an MP, then becomes a special advisor, before being parachuted into a safe seat, and finally ends up serving in the cabinet (Blears, 2012). In 1979 just 3 percent of MPs from the main political parties had occupations described as “politician/ political organiser”, but by 2010 this has risen to 15 percent (which was the second largest individual occupational category after “Business” (25 percent) overall) (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010; McGuinness, 2010).

The above begs the question of the degree of geographical mobility that applies to elected UK politicians in relation to their constituencies? The importance that the British public give to the idea that their MP comes from the local area is one that is largely missing in academic discourse (Cowley, 2013), with the topic of residency being surprisingly under-studied (Cowley and Campbell, forthcoming). Prior to Arzheimer and Evans (2011) there had only been qualitative or inferential, indirect tests of the role of geographical distance in candidate evaluations by voters and subsequent vote choice in the UK, and relatively little research on other countries. This has been principally due to insufficient data to allow the measuring of

distance from voter to candidate in any meaningful manner. It should be noted that prior to the 2010 election MPs precisely voted to remove the obligatory indication of addresses on the ballot paper that had applied over the previous 140 years, although constituency of residence is still given. Even then voters will not necessarily be aware of whether a candidate moved into, or near to, the constituency a (comparatively) short while before the election. Arzheimer and Evans (2011) stated that 'place of birth, regional identity and other dimension of localness all matter, (and) some of these are potentially, if arduously, quantifiable, and may indeed matter more than geographical distance'.

This paper seeks to investigate the question of politician mobility by examining the patterns of geographical relationships between the constituencies served by elected representatives and their place of birth. It is set at a regional level for the reasons set out below. In the circumstances, the analyses establish patterns which provide high-level new knowledge, and raise questions and issues that might point towards further research.

Politician Mobility

Whilst the geographical position of the constituency will be known and straightforward, the place of birth of the elected representative was used to establish whether they were a "local candidate". Place of birth was considered to be the most reasonable and practical means of doing this, given that a person's place of birth is specifically defined and recorded data, and it has been successfully used by other researchers (Tavits, 2010). It is fully appreciated that people can move away from their place of birth as a baby or child and grow up in another area where they might spend the rest of their lives, and have a strong allegiance with, indeed considering themselves to be very much "local". However, to attempt to analyse the life histories of politicians to try and infer whether or not this is the case would be wholly impractical and inappropriate.

Analyses were undertaken for both MPs and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), in part to see if there are any differences. This is relevant because the MPs and MEPs are elected through different processes. The 650 MPs (at 2010) each represent a given geographical constituency and are elected on a "first-past-the-post" basis, i.e. whichever

candidate secures the greatest number of votes wins the seat. The 73 MEPs (at 2009) are elected regionally, based on the standard UK regions, as defined by the Office of National Statistics for the 2001 Census (Office of National Statistics, 2010).

European elections use proportional representation, with a set number of MEPs reflecting the population of each region. The system of proportional representation uses parties' lists of candidates in priority order; the percentage of the votes received for each party dictates how many of their candidates have been elected, and each party then takes the candidates from their list accordingly.

Because MEP data is regionally based all analyses were based on the standard UK regions (Office of National Statistics, 2010), with the definition of someone being local being ascribed to someone who represented a constituency in the same region in which they were borne.

METHOD

Data Requirements

To analyse politician mobility and to try and make inferences in relation to the issues mentioned above it was necessary to obtain basic details about each elected representative. These were: name, age, gender, political party, place of birth and constituency.

Because MEPs are elected on the basis of the 12 standard UK regions (Office of National Statistics, 2010), it was necessary for place of birth and parliamentary constituencies to be assigned to the relevant region. Anyone born outside the UK was allocated to a single "Non-UK" category.

As a proxy for MPs having achieved the highest standing, whether or not they were a member of the cabinet or shadow cabinet was used. Similarly, a proxy was required for whether a MP had followed a "career route" as described by Blears (2012); whether a MP's previous occupation was described as "politician/ political organiser" was used in this regard. Whether a MP's seat is "safe" can be interpreted very broadly, as shown in the Introduction. The most appropriate data required was the size of the majority at the (preceding) election,

which needed to be percentage based because constituencies have different-sized electorates.

Data was only required for elected candidates, because such data is available, and to collect data on the unsuccessful candidates would be impractical.

Data Availability, Quality and Constraints

Data for MPs elected at the 2010 General Election was obtained from the House of Commons Information Unit. The data was valid as at March 2012 and allowed for two early post-2010 by-elections. There are 650 constituencies with the average size of the electorate being 68,175.

Unfortunately, less than half of MPs in England had their region of birth recorded, either directly or through specifically naming the town/city of birth. Where this data was missing, publicly available sources such as Who's Who (2011) and Dod's Parliamentary Companion (Sinclair, 2011), together with MPs' personal websites. Emails were sent where these did not yield the data, with follow-up telephone calls if necessary. In the event only four MPs refused to provide the information; for these information from newspaper sources, and similar, were used, with emails sent to the MPs concerned to advise them of the region they were attributed to, so they could challenge this, but none did.

Whilst the "place of birth" is generally straightforward, it is worth noting that it can involve complexities: one MP's father was a previous MP for the same constituency, and therefore the MP was born in London (while his father was attending parliament) but was then largely brought up in the constituency itself, and so he considers himself to be native to both!

Another MP "believes he was born in London" – he was adopted at birth and brought up in the Midlands. Wherever there was any such ambiguity the place of birth was taken as being where the person was physically born.

Data for MEPs elected at the 2009 European Elections was obtained from the European Parliament Information Office in the United Kingdom (2012). For the two or three who did not have their place of birth stated, this was readily obtained from publicly available sources.

Details of members of the cabinet and shadow cabinet were obtained as at August 2012, which was prior to the main 2012 reshuffles (British Prime Minister's Office, 2012; BBC News, 2012b). The data used were limited to the 21 (shadow) cabinet positions relating to government departments and offices, i.e. they excluded ministers without portfolio, whips and the leaders of the two parliamentary houses. Details of the 90 MPs elected in 2010 who had their previous occupation described as "politician/ political organiser" (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010), was kindly provided by Byron Criddle, of Aberdeen University, who gave qualifications in respect of the data which only involved Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs, plus the Speaker: they did not include *all* MPs who had at some stage in their working lives worked in political occupations, and were those whose occupational experience was judged to have predominantly involved political work. Biographies of MPs (Sinclair, 2011) suggested that all MPs with some experience of political work aggregated to about one quarter of the House of Commons. He highlighted that some MPs' biographies did not always reveal the extent of their political work, which could be hidden behind occupations such as "public relations", and they should not always be read at face value. Also, classifying MPs occupationally comes up against the fact of career change, and of judgement as to the salience of one type of work over another in the MPs career.

Data on the percentage majority of each MP's constituency was kindly provided by MORI (Mortimore et al, 2011) for prior to the 2010 General Election, which necessarily relied on the results of the previous election. This data recorded the percentage of the vote attributed to each party. Given that there is a "first-past-the-post" system in operation, constituencies were categorised by the author according to how large the percentage majority was for the winning candidate over the candidate who was second.

One self-evident limitation of the data on MPs/MEPs is that it only relates to those who were elected. It therefore excludes the details of previous MPs/MEPs who had lost their seats, been deselected or retired.

Analytical Methods

The main analyses involved tables which showed the distribution of MPs/MEPs born according to the region of their constituency and their region of their birth. Given the amount of data involved, it was decided to use the *Nomogramma di Gandy (NdiG)*, which is a flexible diagrammatic method which demonstrates patterns of self-sufficiency (Gandy et al, 2011).

The axes for the diagram were as follows:

X = Percentage of MPs/MEPs in region who were born within region

Y = Percentage of MPs/MEPs born in region who have constituency within region

A self-sufficient region would be represented by the co-ordinate (100,100), where all the MPs/MEPs with constituencies in a region were born in that region, and no-one from that region represented a constituency outside the region.

It was recognised that a MP/MEP could represent a constituency in a neighbouring region which was just over the border from where they were born, which would be very local for them personally. Therefore, some summary analyses allowed for which regions were geographically adjacent to one another, thereby highlighting where someone had crossed multiple regional boundaries:

- A. MPs/MEPs representing constituency in region of their birth
- B. MPs/MEPs representing constituency in neighbouring region to that of their birth (Exc Non-UK)
- C. MPs/MEPs representing constituency in own or adjacent region of their birth (A + B)
- D. MPs/MEPs crossing more than one boundary (Exc Non-UK)
- E. Non-UK MPs/MEPs

Because Northern Ireland is separated from the rest of the UK by sea, it was deemed not adjacent to any other region in this context.

It was anticipated that there would be variations in the numbers of MPs/MEPs born in each region, and therefore comparisons with populations to establish the degree to which this was the case. Population figures for mid-2010 were used (Office of National Statistics, 2011).

As the data was categorised, multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) was used where more than two variables were involved. MCA is a form of cluster analysis which enables the evaluation of categorical data (Panagiotakos and Pitsavos, 2004). Correspondence analysis is an exploratory technique, which was developed based on a philosophical orientation that emphasises the development of models that fit the data, rather than the rejection of hypotheses based on the lack of fit (i.e. Benzecri's second principle of the model fitting the data, not vice versa (Greenacre, 1984)). Therefore, there are no statistical significance tests that are customarily applied to the results of a correspondence analysis; the primary purpose of the technique is to produce a simplified (low-dimensional) representation of the information in a large frequency table or graphical plot with similar measures of correspondence. In the graphical solution, the locations of all variable categories can be compared to each other: short distances imply high similarities and long distances high dissimilarities. For all dimensions, correspondence analysis provides principal inertias which can be interpreted as canonical correlation coefficients between the item categories and the latent variables, and scores for all item categories and all respondents (Blasius and Thiessen, 2001).

RESULTS

The 2010 general election yielded 306 (47 percent) Conservative MPs, 258 (40 percent) Labour, 57 (9 percent) Liberal Democrats, and 29 (4 percent) others (including the Speaker). The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats subsequently agreed to form a coalition government.

The political landscape varies across the UK, with the aforementioned "north-south divide" coming into play. The Conservatives had the majority of MPs in the five regions in the south of England outside London: East Midlands (67 percent); East of England (90 percent); South East (88 percent); South West (65 percent); and West Midlands (54 percent). Labour had the majority of MPs in London (52 percent), as well as in the northern regions of North East (86 percent), North West (63 percent), Scotland (69 percent), Wales (65 percent) and Yorkshire

& the Humber (59 percent). Northern Ireland historically has a unique political make-up within the UK with several locally-based parties, and none of the mainstream parties.

Based on the above, the regions where Conservatives were in the majority accounted for 74 percent of their MPs and regions where Labour was in the majority accounted for 81 percent of its MPs. London and the West Midlands were the most closely-contested regions.

MEPs showed different patterns because of proportional representation, which enables greater numbers of MEPs from minority parties: Conservatives had 26 (36 percent) MEPs, with Labour 13 (18 percent), Liberal Democrats 12 (16 percent) and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) 12 (16 percent). The remaining 10 MEPs were spread over seven parties.

Population patterns

Table 1 summarises the total number of MPs/MEPs born in each region, together with the rate per million population and the associated variation from the national mean. Figure 1 shows how the variations from the national mean for MPs and MEPs relate to one another for each region.

There are clearly great differences between the regions, but these are fairly consistent for both MPs and MEPs. With only one exception, regions were either above the national mean for both MPs and MEPs, or below the national mean for both MPs and MEPs. The single exception was the North West of England, which was above for MPs but only just below for MEPs. The geographical pattern was quite distinct: London (as something of an island) and the north and west of the UK (North East, North West, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) were above the national means, with the remainder (East Midlands, East of England, South East, South West, West Midlands and Yorkshire & the Humber) below. No MEPs were born in the East Midlands.

INSERT Table 1 Summary of MPs and MEPs born in each region and relationship to population

INSERT Figure 1 Comparison of regional variations from mean national population rates (per million) for MPs and MEPs

Politician Mobility

Figure 2 shows the *NdiG* patterns for the different regions for MPs as a whole, male and female MPs, and MPs for the Conservatives, Labour and all other parties combined. Figure 3 shows the same for MEPs. Regions below the 45° diagonal are those which have more MPs/MEPs born in those regions than were elected in those regions, for the category under consideration, i.e. more MPs/MEPs move out than move in. The reverse is the case for regions above the 45° diagonal. It should be noted that the presence of Non-UK born MPs/MEPs means that there will always be a (small) bias towards above the diagonal. As described above, the nearer a region is to the co-ordinate (100,100) the more “self-sufficient” that region is, which suggests limited or no politician mobility. The further away from this co-ordinate, and the nearer to (0,0) the greater the degree of politician mobility. The pattern for all MPs is very diverse, with the regions that most elected local candidates being the North East of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The regions exhibiting the greatest mobility were those in the south and east of England, viz. East of England, London and South East. There were 28 London MPs born within the capital, and they represented 38 percent of the London constituencies and were 25 percent of all Londoners who were MPs. The three central regions of East Midlands, West Midlands and South West were all grouped together above the 45° diagonal, with them all having markedly fewer MPs born in those regions than there were constituencies.

The pattern for all MEPs showed some similarities to that for all MPs, but it was more diffuse, it is inferred because of the smaller numbers. It is seen that the North East of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (together with the North West of England) were the regions that most elected local candidates. Indeed, Wales’ co-ordinate was (100,100). East of England, London and South East were each below 50 percent for both indicators, and the aforementioned three central regions all had fewer MEPs born in them than there were representing them.

There were only 145 (22 percent) female MPs and 23 (32 percent) female MEPs. Therefore the patterns for male MPs had many similarities to that for all MPs. Nevertheless, female

MPs showed broadly similar patterns, but with a small number of notable differences: there was less mobility for females in the North East of England and London, compared to their male counterparts; there was increased mobility for females in Yorkshire & the Humber; and no female born in the East of England was a MP within the region.

For MEPs there was very little similarity between the patterns for males and females, the small numbers for individual regions leading to values of 0 percent or 100 percent in several cases.

In relation to the political parties the patterns for Conservatives, Labour and all other MPs are very different. The Conservatives show a great deal of mobility, with MPs born in the Labour heartlands generally moving out of their regions to obtain a seat. For example, whilst their one MP in Scotland was Scottish, there were 17 other MPs who were born in Scotland. Over half of the London-born Conservative MPs represent constituencies in the neighbouring East of England and South East regions. By comparison, Labour has a more diffuse pattern, with the North of England, Scotland and Wales all largely electing local candidates. Interestingly the greatest mobility is in the Conservative heartland of South East region, where there were 4 Labour seats but 11 Labour MPs born in the region. The West Midlands is a notable outlier in that 7 out of the 8 locally born MPs had seats within the region; however, they only represented 29 percent of the Labour MPs in the West Midlands. The pattern for the other 8 parties plus the Speaker and independent MPs was different again. The Liberal Democrats accounted for two thirds of the MPs involved. The pattern was greatly influenced by nationalist parties and Northern Ireland-specific parties, who usually chose local candidates. The small numbers of MEPs for each party within individual regions mean the results from similar analyses are of limited value: there were no more than 4 Conservative and 2 Labour MEPs in any one region, and each party had regions with one or no MEPs. There was a better spread for all the other MEPs combined, which is arguably influenced by the diverse nature of the nine parties involved: five of these were nationalist or local Northern Ireland parties, and all six such MEPs were born in their local region.

Table 2 sets out an overview of the degree of mobility between the parties and sexes for MPs, and the sexes for MEPs. It distinguishes between whether a politician represents a constituency within the region of his/her birth, an adjacent region, or whether they crossed more than one regional boundary. Non-UK politicians are also shown, where it is seen that over half of such MPs were male Conservatives.

With regards to MEPs it is seen that over 8 percent were Non-UK, and 32 percent crossed more than one regional boundary, compared to 26 percent for MPs. A higher percentage of males than females represented their local region, with a broadly corresponding higher percentage of females crossing more than one regional boundary.

INSERT Figure 2 Key *Nomogramma Di Gandy* Diagrams for MPs (2010)

INSERT Figure 3 Key *Nomogramma Di Gandy* Diagrams for MEPs (2009)

INSERT Table 2 Summary of MPs and MEPs by Gender and Main Party

Analyses in respect of age were undertaken, with MPs and MEPs allocated to the decade they were born. Table 3 shows that there are differences between MPs and MEPs with a much older age profile for the latter: 70 percent of MEPs were born before 1960 compared to 49 percent of MPs; and 10 percent of MEPs were born after 1969 compared to 21 percent of MPs. The percentage representing constituencies in their region of birth was identical for the two; but whereas the distribution ranged between 40 and 49 percent for MPs, for MEPs the range was 26 to 71 percent. The percentage of politicians crossing more than one regional boundary was highest for those born before 1950 for both MPs (32 percent) and MEPs (45 percent).

The number of (selected) cabinet and shadow cabinet members is comparatively small at 42, but they represent the pinnacle of parliamentary positions in the UK. Sixteen (33 percent) represented constituencies in the region of their birth; 7 for the cabinet and 9 for the shadow cabinet. The number that crossed more than one regional boundary was 21 (50 percent); 12 (57 percent) for the cabinet and 9 (43 percent) for the shadow cabinet. (As the cabinet is based on a coalition the percentage of members that crossed more than one regional boundary was 50 for the Conservatives and 80 for the Liberal Democrats). The cabinet had

MPs from constituencies in 8 regions, who were born in 9 different regions (with no more than 4 born in any one region). By comparison, the shadow cabinet had MPs from constituencies in 7 regions, who were born in 6 different regions; 10 were born in London, with 4 from each of the North West and Scotland.

All parliamentary seats were categorised according to the percentage majority of a party prior to the 2010 general election. Table 4 shows a summary overview which includes the results for the 100 and 150 safest seats for each of the Conservatives and Labour, which were held by these parties at the 2010 general election. It will be noted that the totals for the Top 150 is 149 for both parties; this is because each lost one of these seats.

INSERT Table 3 Summary of MPs and MEPs by Decade of Birth

INSERT Table 4 Summary of MPs by Party and Marginality

**INSERT Table 5 Summary of parliamentary seats that elected a MP of a different party
in 2010**

There are clear differences between the main parties. The safest Conservative seats have a much lower percentage of MPs who were born in the local region (23 percent for their Top 150) and a much higher percentage of MPs who crossed more than one regional boundary (40 percent for their Top 100), not only when compared to their Labour equivalents, but also when compared to their other seats. The safest Labour seats had comparatively high percentages of MPs who were born in the local region (63 percent for their Top 100) and low percentages for MPs who crossed more than one regional boundary (24 percent for their Top 100). These were higher and lower respectively than their other seats.

The East of England and South East regions accounted for 85 (57 percent) of the Conservative Top 150 seats, with none in North East region, Scotland or Wales. The safe seats for Labour were more evenly distributed, with 128 (86 percent) of its Top 150 seats being in London, North East, North West, Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire & The Humber. There were no such seats in the East of England and South East regions.

Table 5 focuses on the 115 seats that changed hands at the 2010 general election for the parties in England, Scotland and Wales (excluding the Speaker). The percentage of “change

seat” MPs representing constituencies in their region of birth was slightly higher than for the “retain seat” MPs (46 percent compared to 42 percent), whereas the latter was notably higher where more than one regional boundary was crossed (29 percent compared to 19 percent). It should be noted that if a party retained a seat but its candidate was different to the previous MP, e.g. because the previous MP retired, then it will be the details of the new MP that will have been included in the data and analyses.

MCA was applied to the data for gender, constituency region and region of birth, and separately for gender, marginality and political party. The results for the former are shown in Figures 4 and 5; Figure 5 being an expansion of the congested part of Figure 4. The interpretation is that: the female gender corresponds with the non-movement in the North East; in a separate quadrant Northern Ireland also demonstrates non-movement between constituency region and region of birth and corresponds to the non-movement for Scotland; Wales and East Midlands show a separate correspondence but similar pattern of non-movement, and they are in a third quadrant; almost all other variables repeat these correspondence patterns in the final quadrant, and these correspond with the male gender (except South East which straddles the top-right/ bottom-right quadrants). Non-UK can be ignored because it has no associated constituency category.

**INSERT Figure 4 Multiple Correspondence Analysis Diagram for
Gender, Constituency Region and Region of Birth**

INSERT Figure 5 Expanded Detail from Figure 4

The results for the MCA analysis of gender, marginality and political party are shown in Figure 6. The interpretation is that: males correspond to the non-movement of Conservatives and the Conservatives’ top 100 safest seats; Labour and the Labour top 100 safest seats correspond (in a separate quadrant); females correspond to non-movement for SDLP, Alliance, Green and Independent; everything else corresponds with each other in the final quadrant.

**INSERT Figure 6 Multiple Correspondence Analysis Diagram for
Gender, Marginality and Political Party**

Figure 6 prompted further analysis of the relationship between gender and marginality. This showed that whilst females accounted for 16 percent of all Conservative MPs they accounted for only 8 percent of the party's 100 safest seats. For Labour the corresponding figures were 32 percent and 27 percent respectively.

The 90 "career route" MPs whose previous occupation was "politician/ political organiser" (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010) were split: 30 (33 percent) Conservatives; 52 (58 percent) Labour; and 8 (9 percent) Liberal Democrats and the Speaker. This meant that such MPs represented 10 percent of Conservative MPs, 20 percent of Labour MPs, and 14 percent of Liberal Democrats (plus the Speaker), giving an overall 14 percent. It was found that 33 percent of such MPs crossed more than one regional boundary and 33 percent represented a constituency in their region of birth. By comparison, for MPs in these parties who had other prior occupations, 26 percent of such MPs crossed more than one regional boundary and 44 percent represented a constituency in their region of birth.

Looking at the parties individually, it was found that 37 percent of such Labour MPs crossed more than one regional boundary compared to 26 percent for other Labour MPs, with the 37 percent representing a constituency in their region of birth compared to 55 percent for other Labour MPs. Although the numbers were much smaller the pattern for such Liberal Democrats (plus the Speaker) was similar: 50 percent crossed more than one regional boundary compared to 20 percent for their other party colleagues, and 25 percent represented a constituency in their region of birth compared to 52 percent for other party colleagues. The Conservatives showed a different pattern with 21 percent of such Conservative MPs crossing more than one regional boundary compared to 28 percent for other Conservative MPs. A marginally smaller percentage of such Conservative MPs represented a constituency in their region of birth compared to other party colleagues: 30 percent and 34 percent respectively. Most notable was that 48 percent of such Conservative MPs represented a constituency adjacent to that of their birth (compared to 36 percent for other party colleagues).

Making comparisons between these “career route” MPs and how safe their seat was deemed, it was seen that: 18 (60 percent) of such Conservative MPs accounted for 12 percent of the safest 150 Conservative seats; and 33 (63 percent) of such Labour MPs accounted for 22 percent of the safest 150 Labour seats. In terms of the other seats outside the safest 150 for each party, “career route” MPs accounted for 8 percent of the Conservative seats and 18 percent of the Labour seats.

DISCUSSION

Political influences and context

There are many potential factors which can influence local parties to choose candidates who are not from their local area, over and above how they perform during the selection process itself. Previous political experience is favoured (Gherghina and Chiru, 2010). This can include whether a candidate has ‘served their political apprenticeship’ by previously contesting ‘unwinnable’ seats on behalf of the party. Also, many politicians who were previously MPs, but who lost their seat at an earlier election, will naturally seek selection when a vacancy arises. For example, Labour’s Stephen Twigg defeated Michael Portillo, the then Conservative Minister for Defence, for Enfield Southgate in the 1997 general election. He was born in Enfield (in London) and was very much a local candidate. He was re-elected in 2001 but lost the seat to the Conservatives in 2005. Only 11 of the 100 safest Labour seats were in the south east of England, most with long-serving MPs, and therefore it is no surprise that Twigg should need to look further afield for a return to parliament. He was selected for the (safe) Liverpool West Derby constituency, where he was elected as MP in 2010; subsequently becoming Shadow Education Secretary (BBC News, 2012b). Twigg was one of only 5 MPs elected in 2010 having previously served in parliaments prior to 2005, but not in the 2005-10 parliament (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010; McGuinness, 2010).

The issue of politicians being parachuted into safe seats, particularly those following a political career route (Blears, 2012), is a very real one, given how voters value local candidates (Arzheimer and Evans, 2011; Cowley and Campbell, forthcoming). However, the

need to travel far for such opportunities is not essential, as one third of MPs whose previous occupation was “politician/ political organiser” (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010) represented a constituency in their home region, and another third were in a region adjacent to that of their birth. A much higher percentage of such MPs crossed more than one regional boundary for Labour than for the Conservatives, and indeed for Labour MPs with different occupational backgrounds.

From the perspective of party leaders there is the dilemma that candidates with strong local ties and local-level political experience tend to be more successful electorally, but then they are more likely to break party unity in parliament (Tavits, 2010). The corollary is that centrally-preferred candidates who are not local might be a greater risk electorally, but they are likely to show greater allegiance to the party (and therefore its leader). Given that sitting MPs tend to be re-selected by their parties, unless they retire or are guilty of some misdemeanour, the number of times that a safe seat will become available for a new candidate will be limited, and this serves to heighten the importance of the selection process for the incumbent party. The European experience suggests that party leaders have been able to retain ultimate control over candidate selection, and that the democratization of the selection process has been more formal than real (Hopkin, 2001). Large parties tend to apply more centralized selection methods than small parties, although this does vary: southern European parties apply centralized selection methods, whereas Nordic countries’ methods are decentralized (Lundell, 2004). Therefore to pretend that parties never engineer the selection of centrally-preferred candidates over locally-preferred candidates would be naive; and so the question becomes one of the degree to which this may or may not occur.

Arzheimer and Evans (2012) analyses of all candidates at the 2010 general election – not just those that were elected, as with this research – showed that the modal number of candidates, from the three main parties, living in the constituency where they stood was 2 (42 percent). For 34 percent of the English constituencies, only one of the main party contenders lived within their boundaries. Having none of the candidates living in the constituency was unusual (7 percent), while 17 percent of the constituency have three

resident main party candidates. It follows that in the majority of English voters had at least two local candidates to choose from, one of which would usually be the sitting MP.

When considering the results, the prevailing political context at the time of the two elections studied needs to be borne in mind: the Labour Party had successive large majorities at each of the three preceding UK general elections, and there were large areas of the UK and whole cities where the Conservatives had few or no MPs; Gordon Brown had replaced Tony Blair as UK prime minister; Labour's popularity was waning in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, and its impact on the UK economy; the sovereign debt crises in Europe; increasing euroscepticism in the UK (Clark, 2012; De Vries and Edwards, 2009). Proportional representation results in minor political parties' representatives being elected, which does not happen in "first-past-the-post" elections (illustrated by 12 UKIP MEPs in 2009).

Influences on mobility

That some politicians will have moved from the place where they were born is inevitable, as does much of the populace over their lifetime, for a variety of reasons. They will include those who moved into a region when young, and those who have lived somewhere for so long that they consider themselves, and are considered by the local population to be "local". One key factor in population churn involves university education. In 2002, 52 percent of the 309,460 degree acceptances for UK students were for a university in their region of birth, which meant that 48 percent of students moved out of their home region (McClelland and Gandy, 2012). Around three quarters of MPs elected in 2010 were university graduates, and 27 percent had an Oxbridge background (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010; McGuinness, 2010). As not all graduates return to their home region, it follows that university education will have contributed to politician mobility to some degree.

Historical and familial links with areas can also play a part. Oliver Colvile, Conservative MP for Plymouth, Sutton & Devonport, had lived locally for over 10 years prior to his election in 2010. He was born in Guildford (South East region), but hails from a naval family; his father served as an officer in the Royal Navy for over thirty years, his grandfather was First

Lieutenant of Plymouth's Naval barracks, and his uncle was a Royal Marines officer who served at Stonehouse in Plymouth (Colvile, 2013, personal communication).

Population churn in England over the period 1999 – 2004 showed something of a north-south divide, with northern regions having much less population churn than regions to the south (which has parallels with the observed patterns of politician mobility). London was a clear outlier: although its population only increased by 4 percent over the 5-year period, this involved 25 percent new people (including births) into the region, and 21 percent leaving (including deaths) (Gandy, 2009). It is therefore interesting that London involved some of the greatest mobility with its MPs and MEPs: many politicians from other regions have constituencies in the capital, and many Londoners have constituencies in other regions.

Main issues and pointers from results

Presenting the results to allow for whether or not regions were geographically adjacent was important, as is illustrated by the fact that the MP for Stoke-on-Trent North was born in Congleton, a neighbouring town, just 7 miles across the North West – West Midlands boundary. However, some regions are geographically large (e.g. South West), and so a politician could represent a constituency up to 200 miles from where they were born, but still be within the same region. Therefore, this research cannot offer firm conclusions, but it does raise issues and pointers, some of which would be suitable for further research.

The North East of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, along with London and the North West, had the highest rates of MPs born in the region compared to population.

With the exception of the North West, these were the five regions that had the highest rates for elected MEPs. This begs the question about whether these regions are more politicised than the other UK regions, or whether the politicians from these regions are simply better at getting selected than those from other regions.

The North East of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were the regions that were clearly most self-sufficient in terms of the election of local MPs, and along with the North West, were the most self-sufficient in terms of the election of MEPs. This suggests that “being local” is a key factor in their selection and election. The other (English) regions

showed much more mobility in their elective representatives, with the greatest degree of mobility occurring in the three regions in the south east of England (viz. East of England, London and South East) for MPs and the same three regions plus South West for MEPs. The geographical heartlands of the Conservative and Labour parties are respectively in the south and north of the UK (excluding Northern Ireland), and account for most of their respective safe seats. Therefore, it is not surprising that ambitious Conservative politicians born within the Labour heartland will look to migrate to the Conservative heartland, and vice versa. However, the most notable observation was arguably that Labour was more likely to place a locally-born politician into its safest seats, whilst the Conservatives were most likely to select someone from some distance. This does not mean that such candidates do not have any connection with their constituency, for reasons already discussed, but it does suggest a greater degree of mobility amongst Conservatives and possibly greater central influence in placing external candidates into safe seats.

The number and percentage of women MPs had been steadily increasing from 19 (3 percent) in 1979 to 143 (22 percent) in 2010, accounting for 32 percent of Labour MPs and 16 percent of Conservative MPs in 2010 (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010; McGuinness, 2010). However, the patterns observed did not show that there were any significant differences between the two sexes in terms of politician mobility for both MPs and MEPs, although there were some local variations. What was noticeable was the male dominance of the Conservatives' 100 safest seats.

The older profile of MEPs compared to MPs was notable, as was the fact that the older MEPs were more mobile than their MP equivalents, with the younger MEPs more likely to represent the region of their birth.

When considering the hypothesis that politicians are being increasingly parachuted into safe seats (away from their origins), it is interesting to note that half the cabinet and shadow cabinet crossed more than one regional boundary – a higher proportion than for any of the other analyses. This may appear to support the hypothesis, in that it relates to the politicians who have made it to the very top of the political ladder. (Three of the five Liberal Democrat

cabinet members were in that party's 20 safest seats). In addition, there have been increases in the number of MPs whose previous occupation was "politician/ political organiser" since 1979 (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010; McGuinness, 2010) and the results show that in 2010 over 60 percent of such MPs represented one of the Top 150 safest seats for both Conservatives and Labour. However, the percentage of such MPs who crossed more than one regional boundary was much higher for Labour at 37 percent, than the 21 percent for the Conservatives. A higher percentage of such MPs moved out of their region of birth for the Conservatives than for Labour, but they were primarily into their neighbouring region. Counter to the above, it was observed that: a greater percentage of the "change seat" MPs represented a constituency in the region of their birth than those where the party retained the seat (46 percent compared to 42 percent); and, a lesser percentage of the "change seat" MPs crossed more than one regional boundary than those where the party retained the seat (19 percent compared to 29 percent). McGuinness (2010) highlighted that of those elected in 2010, 227 (35 percent) had no previous parliamentary experience, which is a much larger number than the 115 "change seat" MPs, and will include MPs who replaced the previous incumbent but the party retained the seat.

The results show that there are different influences in different regions of the UK for the different parties. Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales look to local politicians, with the latter two being within the Labour heartland. Where a politician is born is one influence on their politics, and if it is not in the heartland of their chosen party then they are more likely to move to obtain a parliamentary seat; the proportional representation of MEP elections means that, for the main parties, there will be opportunities to represent the local region, but the numbers will be smaller.

It is concluded that whilst the main political parties will no doubt engineer the placement of their rising stars into safe seats, this will not involve large numbers, as there are only so many "rising stars" that any one party can have. Arguably they are noticeable because they are exceptions, given that 232 (36 percent) of MPs were newly elected in 2010 (McGuinness, 2010). There is a great deal of politician mobility (as defined in this research) across all

parties, but three-quarters of MPs and two-thirds of MEPs represent constituencies within their region of birth, or an adjacent region.

CONCLUSIONS

The UK regions, outside London, which have the highest number of MPs and MEPs born per head of population are also the ones that have the least political mobility. The south east of England, and in particular London have the greatest mobility.

A large number of factors influence politician mobility, and these can be personal to the individual politician; but if a Conservative or Labour politician was not born in the heartland of his/her chosen party, then they are more likely to seek a constituency in a region that is.

Despite there being differences in the mix of political parties due to the different electoral processes, in general the patterns for UK MPs and MEPs are fairly similar, except in respect of age. Females were more likely to cross more than one regional boundary than males, particularly for Conservative MPs, and there was a higher differential in this regard for MEPs compared to MPs.

No doubt the main political parties engineer the placement of their rising stars into safe seats, and there was notably high politician mobility for members of the cabinet and shadow cabinet. Nevertheless, these are likely to be noticed as the exceptions, given the overall turnover, because whilst there is considerable politician mobility for both MPs and MEPs, the vast majority represent constituencies within their region of birth, or an adjacent region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Bob McClelland of Liverpool John Moores University for his help, support and advice in the preparation of this paper. Particular thanks to Dr Roger Mortimore, Director of Political Analysis, Social Research Institute, Ipsos MORI, for kindly providing the data on the marginality of parliamentary seats, and to Byron Criddle, of Aberdeen University, for kindly providing data and advice in respect of MPs' previous occupations. I would like to

thank Professor Phil Cowley, University of Nottingham, and Professor Joss Evans, University of Salford, for their help and advice with some key sources.

I would also like to acknowledge the help of the House of Commons Information Unit with the provision of the base MP data. My thanks to those MPs and MEPs who were kind enough to respond to my direct enquiries.

REFERENCES

Arzheimer, K., and Evans, J. (2012) Geolocation and voting: candidate-voter distance effects on party choice in the 2010 General Election in England. *Political Geography*, 31, 301-310.

BBC News (2012a) Rotherham by-election: Walkout over Labour candidate choice, 14th November, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-20322069>, accessed 22 February 2013.

BBC News (2012b) Ed Miliband's shadow cabinet and ministerial teams, 17 May, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11494915>, accessed 23 August 2012.

Blasius, J., and Thiessen, V. (2001) Methodological Artifacts in Measures of Political Efficacy and Trust: A Multiple Correspondence Analysis. *Political Analysis* 9 (1): 1-20.

Bleas, H. (2012) Making our representatives more representative. 28 September, <http://www.fabians.org.uk/making-our-representatives-more-representative/>, accessed 22 February 2013.

British Prime Minister's Office (2012) Government departments and their ministers. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/the-coalition/the-government/>, accessed 23 August 2012.

Childs, S., and Cowley, P. (2011) The politics of local presence: Is there a case for descriptive representation? *Political Studies* 59(1): 1–19.

Clark, T. (2012) Euroscepticism growing among voters, Guardian/ICM poll finds. Guardian, 26 December, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/dec/26/euroscepticism-growing-voters-poll>, accessed 22 February 2013.

- Cowley, P. (2013) Why not ask the audience? Understanding the public's representational priorities. *British Politics* 1–26, advance online publication 14 January, doi: 10.1057/bp.2012.28
- Cowley, P., and Campbell, R. (forthcoming) What voters want: reactions to candidate characteristics in a survey experiment, *Political Studies*, in press.
- De Vries, C. E. and Edwards, E. E. (2009) Taking Europe To Its Extremes Extremist Parties and Public Euroscepticism. *Party Politics* 15(1): 5-28. doi: 10.1177/135406880809788.
- Electoral Calculus (2009) Safe Seats: Are MPs really at risk? 13 September <http://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/safeseats.html>, accessed 22 February 2013.
- European Parliament Information Office in the United Kingdom (2012) Your Members in the European Parliament: List by Region, http://www.europarl.org.uk/view/en/your_MEPs/List-MEPs-by-region.html, accessed 22 February 2013.
- Field, W. (1997) *Regional Dynamics: The Basis of Electoral Support in Britain*. London: Frank Cass.
- Gandy, R., Franci, A., Guerrieri, C., and McClelland, R. (2011) Demonstrating access to public services diagrammatically. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 34: 516–27.
- Gandy, R. (2009) Demonstrating Churn Diagrammatically, *Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Annual Conference*, 3rd – 6th November, Liverpool. Full proceedings on CD-ROM – ISBN 978 1 900862 16 5; Conference Handbook - ISBN 978 1 900862 17 2 (abstracts and authors' details).
- Gherghina, S., and Chiru, M. (2010) Practice and payment: Determinants of candidate list position in European Parliament elections. *European Union Politics* 11(4): 533-552. doi: 10.1177/1465116510380284.
- Greenacre, M. J. (1984) *Theory and applications of correspondence analysis*. London: Academic Press.
- Hannan, D. (2009) Not convinced about open primaries? Daily Telegraph, 27 September. <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/danielhannan/100011483/not-convinced-about-open-primaries-read-this/>, accessed 22 February 2013.

Hopkin, J. (2001) Bringing the Members Back in? Democratizing Candidate Selection in Britain and Spain. *Party Politics* 7(3): 343-361. doi: 10.1177/1354068801007003005.

Johnson, C., and Rosenblatt, G. (2007) Do MPs have the 'Right Stuff?'. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 60: 164-9.

Katz, R. S. (2001) The Problem of Candidate Selection and Models of Party Democracy. *Party Politics* 7(3): 277-296. doi: 10.1177/1354068801007003002.

Kavanagh, D., and Cowley, P. (2010) *The British General Election of 2010*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN-10: 0230521908 | ISBN-13: 978-0230521902.

Lundell, L. (2004) Determinants of Candidate Selection: The Degree of Centralization in Comparative Perspective. *Party Politics* 10(1): 25-47. doi: 10.1177/1354068804039119.

McClelland, R., and Gandy R. (2012). Undergraduate regional migration in the UK: perspectives on local markets and trends for gender and international student groups, *Studies in Higher Education* 37(8): 901-924. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.602397.

McGuinness, F. (2010) Social background of MPs (Standard Note: SN/SG/1528). House of Commons Library: Social & General Statistics Section. 14 December, www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01528.pdf, accessed 22 February 2013.

Mortimore, R., Cleary, H., and Mludzinski, T. (2011). The campaign as experienced by the voters in the battleground seats; in Wring, D., Mortimore, R., and Atkinson S. (eds), *Political Communication in Britain: The Leader Debates, the Campaign and the Media in the 2010 General Election*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Page 111 gives the definition used in the polling.

Office of National Statistics (2010) Census 2001 first results.

Office of National Statistics (2011) Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2010. Annual Mid-year Population Estimates, 2010. Released: 30 June 2011. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-uk--england-and-wales--scotland-and-northern-ireland/mid-2010-population-estimates/index.html>, accessed 22 February 2013.

Panagiotakos, D., and Pitsavos, C. (2004) Interpretation of Epidemiological Data Using Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Log-linear Models. *Journal of Data Science* 2: 75-86.

Phillips, A. (1995) *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sinclair, M. (2011) *Dods Parliamentary Companion 2012*. Published by Dod's Parliamentary Communications: London. ISBN-10: 190823203X; ISBN-13: 978-1908232038.

Social And Spatial Inequalities Group, University of Sheffield (2012) The North-South Divide - Where is the line? <http://sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/maps/nsdivide/index.html>, accessed 22 February 2013.

Tavits, M. (2009) The Making of Mavericks: Local Loyalties and Party Defection. *Comparative Political Studies* 42(6): 793-815. doi:10.1177/0010414008329900.

Tavits, M. (2010) Effect of Local Ties On Electoral Success and Parliamentary Behaviour: The Case of Estonia. *Party Politics* 16(2): 215-235 doi:10.1177/1354068809341053.

Watt, N. (2012) Ed Miliband warned to stop talking about north-south divide. *Guardian*, 28 December, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/dec/28/ed-miliband-north-south-divide>, accessed 22 February 2013.

Who's Who (2012) London: Bloomsbury Publishing. Published 5 December 2011. ISBN: 9781408142295.

WORD COUNT

Main Article (exc. Acknowledgements & References) = 8147

Main Article (Inc. Acknowledgements & References) = 9067